



STAR TREK BEYOND

★★★★

RELEASED: Now Showing
DIRECTOR: Justin Lin
CAST: Chris Pine, Zoe Saldana, Idris Elba
RATING: M

Star Trek is Star Trek again.

The days of J.J. Abrams misunderstanding and misrepresenting Gene Roddenberry's Star Trek universe are over. Shed of Abram's under-confidence in the merits of the wildly popular franchise, in the hands of director Justin Lin, *Star Trek Beyond* finally boldly goes where it should have when the series was initially rebooted in 2009. Star Trek is not Star Wars, James T. Kirk is not Han Solo, and Lin knows it.

The film opens two years into a five-year long voyage of deep space exploration. Kirk (Chris Pine) is growing restless of his mission, finding that the tasks at hand are becoming stale and 'episodic'. The use of that crucial word is a welcome hint from Lin and screenwriters, Simon Pegg and Doug Jung, that *Star Trek Beyond* will embrace the foundations laid out by Roddenberry's original series, and not the ones established by Abram's entertaining albeit careless space operas.

The Enterprise is drawn into a rescue mission that will lead to Kirk and the crew being stranded on a distant and inhospitable planet. It's all part of the nefarious plan of villain, Krull (Idris Elba). It will also feel familiar

to anyone with any degree of acquaintance with science fiction, but that's sort of the point. There's a sense of classicism to *Star Trek Beyond*. It appreciates the legacy with which it interacts. It also doesn't shy away from character interaction and development that don't run in conjunction with action set pieces. The film plays like an episode of the original television series with an enormous budget. The confidence in Roddenberry's universe and characters is welcome.

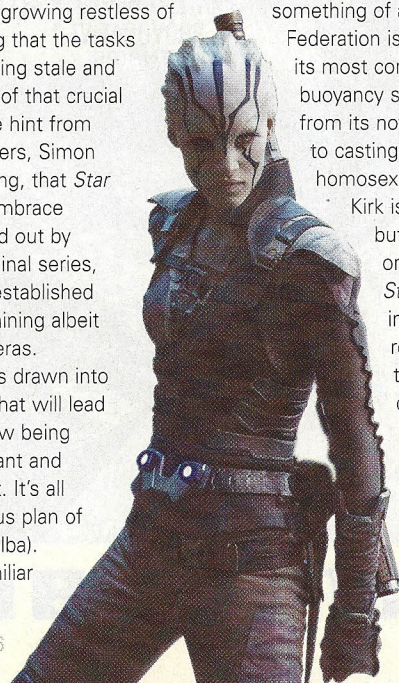
Part of that confidence entails optimism, something of a rarity in science fiction. The Federation is a reflection of the future at its most constructive and positive. That buoyancy saturates *Star Trek Beyond*, from its noticeably multicultural approach to casting, to the inclusion of a central homosexual character, to the fact that

Kirk is not an antagonistic leader but rather engages in violence only when drawn into combat. *Star Trek Beyond* allows for inclusivity and it allows for reflection. Those were once two of the principle hallmarks of Roddenberry's saga. Star Trek is Star Trek again.

John Roebuck

FURTHER VIEWING:

Star Trek: Into Darkness



GHOSTBUSTERS ★★★

RELEASED: Now Showing **DIRECTOR:** Paul Feig
CAST: Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig, Chris Hemsworth **RATING:** PG

It's hard to think of a film that's sparked so much vitriol online, before anyone had actually seen it, mind you, than Paul Feig's girl-powered redux of Ivan Reitman's 1984 comedy classic. *Ghostbusters* has been haunted by derision since it was first announced, a fact that's addressed early in the movie, and later when the film delivers a self-critique as Kristen Wiig's character notes, "It's not terrible at all." And she's right, it's actually pretty good, albeit fleetingly funny. This isn't the first "untouchable classic" to be remade and it won't be the last, and Feig has wisely ensured it's not just a tired retread of what has gone before, although he dutifully pays homage to the original with some distracting cameos (human, spectral and marshmallow), plot elements, and an effects-laden climax. It's an alternate universe version where the 'busters are a sisterhood comprised of Kristen Wiig's physicist, Melissa McCarthy's paranormal researcher, Kate McKinnon's steampunk scientist, and Leslie Jones's subway worker. When you think it could easily have been Will Ferrell, Ed Helms, Adam Sandler and Kevin Hart doing the busting, the gender switch is a good idea, and one that works. Leave your love of the original at home and consider this a novelty cover version of an old favourite. **Scott Hocking**

LIGHTS OUT ★★★★★

RELEASED: Now Showing **DIRECTOR:** David F. Sandberg **CAST:** Teresa Palmer, Gabriel Bateman, Alexander DiPersia **RATING:** M

If a comedy that is bad in measures by which the quality of a film is usually judged still makes you laugh, is it a good comedy? *Lights Out* has merits that don't involve manufacturing scares, but the central draw and the success of the film orbit around the fright that it manages to induce in people. If other films have so successfully engendered fear of the dark then they are few.

A mysterious figure only presents itself in the absence of light and is capable of murder. A mother suffers from depression and her illness may be linked to the appearance of the figure. A son can't sleep because his mother talks to shadows in the middle of the night. A daughter who abandoned her family years ago is forced to return to the demons of her past in order to save her brother.

Director David Sandberg has developed his film around horror hallmarks that have existed since the silent era, yet his central conceit, that a phantom is only visible in the shadows, is powerful enough to justify the ways in which *Lights Out* fails to present original narrative material. These are jump scares, which means that fear of *Lights Out* may be fear of fear itself. Sandberg's film is unquestionably scary, unless the audience in question is built of a tougher mettle than poor, shaken up film critics.

John Roebuck

RATING KEY: ★★★★★ Wow! ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Not bad ★★★★★ Meh ★★★★★ Woof!